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ABSTRACT

A study assessed the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) community's attitudes regarding the use of database services in general, and LEXIS/NEXIS in particular. The study followed a review of issues relating to database research in CEDA debate. Two surveys were conducted--a mail survey to CEDA programs and a tournament survey of CEDA debaters. The mail survey asked 238 potential respondents to answer several demographic items designed to determine program budgets, activities, coaching staffs, travel patterns, access to databases, and perceptions of the quality of their library, as well as their reliance on database research; the survey also included 12 statements regarding use of LEXIS/NEXIS and other databases. Debaters were surveyed at a major tournament in 1995. Mail survey response was 71 programs, for a response rate of 29.8%. For the tournament survey, 73 useable responses were received out of 204, for a response rate of 35.8%. Programs vary in their resources, and surveys indicated that LEXIS/NEXIS has created a climate of "haves" and "have nots" within the CEDA community. The majority agreed that access to LEXIS/NEXIS places programs at a competitive advantage over programs lacking access. The respondents also agreed that forensics educators should train students in the use of online research services, since while programs and students may disagree about LEXIS/NEXIS's value, most agree that online research is an important dimension in training debaters. Dependency on databases, however, will prevent debaters from developing the range of advocacy and research abilities needed to succeed in the debate arena. (Includes 10 tables of data and five notes; contains eight references. Surveys instruments are appended.) (NKA)

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ED 421 733

Attitudes Toward the Use of Lexis-Nexis Research in CEDA: The Case for Limiting its Use?[1]

Presented at the Annual Meeting of the
Speech Communication Association
San Antonio, TX
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RUNNING HEAD: Lexis-Nexis Attitudes

Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) debate continues to evolve in response to its influencing factors. One of the factors having a profound influence on CEDA debate is technology, specifically database, or on-line research services. Freeley (1996) outlines the role that databases have assumed in academic debate:

> Almost every debate team has access to databases in their briefing room on their home campus. Practically every team now carries a notebook computer equipped with modem, fax, and printer to tournaments, and the tournament host often provides a computer room with phone lines for database access.
>
> In addition to doing research at the tournament site, team may fax a request for research and assistance to their friends at home. The home team researches the problem and faxes, for example, a set of blocks and supporting evidence to the team at the tournament. There it is combined with the research the team at the tournament has done (pp 79-80).

These databases can include any one of a number available by subscription to debate programs, as well as Internet sources that are free to all users. Perhaps the most popular of databases used by debaters is LEXIS/NEXIS. As explained by Freeley (1996), "LEXIS covers virtually every publication in the legal field, from court reports to journals. NEXIS covers general news" (p. 79).

While database research has become a dominant part of evidence gathering in academic debate, the jury is still out regarding its overall value in the activity. This paper assesses the CEDA community's attitudes regarding the use of database services in general, and LEXIS/NEXIS in particular, by debaters. An outline of this study follows a review of issues relating to

database research in CEDA debate. Results are discussed in terms of potential implications for future CEDA practices.

The Debate Over On-Line Services

Cue (1989) highlights the importance of evidence gathering and debate practice:

> As debaters become conversant with new technologies for gathering information almost daily, it is important to examine how the use of information in debate rounds advances the educational goals of intercollegiate debate as a laboratory for teaching and refining argumentation understanding and skills (p. 4).

Cue goes on to conclude:

> Almost certainly, debaters who develop skills in using the information technologies available to them will be better equipped to participate in the world community. It is important, then, to examine some of the implications that the current development of information technologies hold as we tackle the world's problems in the next century (p. 12).

Clearly information is not inherently beneficial or detrimental. Within a debate realm, the availability of it should be seen as positive--the more information that is available to students, the more potential there is to learn about issues. However, the expanding role that on-line research plays in academic debate has generated concerns that range from training of debaters to the types of arguments made in debate rounds. The implications of evidence gathering technologies on CEDA debate fall within several areas.

Availability of Database Services

An issue receiving much attention within the CEDA community is programs' access to on-line research services. The combination of technology required to access databases, along

with the fiscal resources necessary to secure subscriptions to on-line services has made debate research an issue of equality in academic debate. As a general rule, libraries are equipped with electronic research gathering abilities ranging from CD-ROM materials to on-line resources. Additionally, these resources can come in both full-text and bibliographical citation formats. The reality is that while most libraries provide such services, the range of services can vary greatly from library to library.

Some debate programs attempt to supplement their institution's library services with personal or program subscriptions to database services. While a wealth of resources are available to debaters at no cost through the Internet, database subscriptions provide a more expansive menu of research options. Herein lies the issue of access. Some campuses are not equipped for access to the Internet, while others are unable to "surf" the most valuable Internet resources, such as the World Wide Web. Similarly, programs often find it difficult to allot limited financial resources to on-line services. Further complicating the issue is the reality that some database services, including LEXIS/NEXIS, limit equal access to its services.[2] Yet another factor that limits program access to on-line services is the technology necessary to access databases. As is noted earlier, programs are often equipped with laptop computers, modems, and printers when they travel to tournaments. This may well be in addition to computer equipment owned and used on campus. Such materials are not affordable to all programs.

While access is a concern surrounding the increased use of on-line research in CEDA, other concerns center around the impact such research has on the arguments being made by debaters.

Quality of Evidence

A common concern in research is the quality of the source and evidence. On-line services vary in what they provide to users. Some on-line services provide full-text access to academic journals, while others limit their resources to non-refereed magazines and newspapers. LEXIS/NEXIS, for example, affords the researcher access to hundreds of newspapers and governmental publications. A concern surrounding database research is that it often lacks the level of analysis and credibility found in books and other refereed materials. While still valuable, much of what one might find from on-line services will be written by staff writers and lack explanation or analysis. Some argue that the increased reliance on database research perpetuates the mindset that the quantity of evidence advanced in a debate round is more important than the quality of the evidence. Database research allows debaters to gather materials faster and in much greater quantities than is possible with pulling materials from library shelves. The concern is that the increased amount of evidence available to debaters brings with it the likelihood that more will be read in debate rounds. This becomes a greater concern if debaters begin to construct arguments centered around evidence that does a poor job of supporting claims. The insights debaters gain into their

positions become limited, while the strength of the arguments being made is lessened with the lesser quality research. This implication of on-line research also extends to the types of arguments being made in debate rounds.

Impact of On-Line Research on Argument

Similar to the concerns surrounding the quality of evidence are the impacts that on-line research has on both argumentative strategy in debate rounds, as well as the standards by which evidence and arguments are weighed against one another. Among the countless reasons that programs and debaters have come to rely on database research is the ability to gather literally "up-to-the-minute" research. Some databases, such as LEXIS/NEXIS, provide frequent updates. Such an ability has had profound impacts on the importance of time-frames in disadvantages and other impact scenarios. Debaters now have the ability to cite foreign newspapers that are technically published a day ahead of the round in which their material might be used in debate rounds. Often a more recent piece of evidence is argued to invalidate an opponent's claim simply because of the date. Hobbs (1994) writes that "age or the passage of time, in and of itself, does not render evidence useless. Old evidence becomes useless when events occur during the passage of time which cause us to change our minds about the facts or assumptions involved" (p. 3).

Of course, there are instances when on-line services allow debaters access to events that may alter the plausibility of arguments being made by opponents. If the likelihood of a

backlash by Country X is centered around that nation's leadership, and suddenly Country X's leadership changes, then the logical conclusion is that the likelihood of a backlash from Country X lessens. Even so, the ability of some database research to provide analysis that explains how events interact within the framework of arguments being made is limited. Tuman (1993) expands on this concern:

> After all, how much critical review can one give a wire service report about Bosnia, when the evidence is only twenty minutes old? While the idea of recency in evidence appeals to me (as do the computer skills learned), I am troubled by the questions we are not encouraging our students to ask about the evidence (p. 89).

Citing an event that may or may not mitigate brinks in disadvantages or alter impacts in scenarios is not enough. Hobbs (1994) argues, "coaches, judges, and debaters need to start demanding that the 'whys' be clearly articulated in the debate round. Reasons need to be presented so that there can be a clear comparison of narratives. . ." (p. 4).

Beyond the arguments being made in debate rounds, databases have also impacted the expectations debaters and judges have for affirmatives and negatives.

Increased Burdens of Rejoinder

Among the greatest benefits of databases is that they make available literally thousands of potential sources of evidence. The full-text capabilities of services such as LEXIS/NEXIS only add to the ease of researching several topics. This ability makes it much easier for debaters to be prepared to argue a

variety of cases. In fact, the expectation that negatives should be able to research and be prepared on virtually any case is higher in the era of on-line research than it was a decade ago.

Similarly, the argument that available ground mitigates negative non-topicality claims is heard with greater frequency. Increasingly affirmatives are arguing smaller examples of the resolution while making the argument that negatives have plenty of ground as a result of the case being posted on national case lists, being argued at past tournaments, or the example being written about on databases. While the legitimacy of these claims can be argued in another context, an additional problem is that some programs lack the ability to prepare a negative strategy for smaller affirmative cases. Small budget libraries and teams that lack their own database services are just as unprepared (if not moreso) to research sub-topical cases now as they were five and ten years ago. To the extent that negatives are forced to assume a greater burden of rejoinder, programs that lack access to on-line services are placed in an unfair position.

Other implications for the increased use of database research in CEDA lie within the preparation of debaters for both tournament competition, as well as life beyond the debate round.

Preparation for a Technologically-Oriented Society

The advent of electronic research gathering is not unique to the debate arena. Technological advances loom all around us. It would seem natural and responsible that today's debate education includes training in the use of databases and technology, such as

computer competence and familiarity with the Internet. Freeley (1996) observes that "the history of databases, though brief, is encouraging. Each year the costs have declined and the quality has improved" (p. 80).' Freeley adds that "an important bonus is that the often-intensive research undertaken for debate enhances students' ability to write papers for class assignments and prepare for the 'real' world after college" (p. 80).

Interestingly, the increase of technology in debate research has caused some debate educators to become technology-literate in order to make on-line research and technology use a part of their curriculums and coaching strategies. While once again, the lack of resources on some campuses is a problem, debate programs and their educators must recognize the new burden of training students for an increasingly technological world. While such training is essential, it should not take place at the expense of past approaches to research.

Impact on Research-Ability of Students

Although databases have made research faster and easier than it once was, some aspects of research still require library use beyond computer terminals. Book titles that are indexed on computers must still be found on the shelves. While many libraries provide full-text database access to thousands of journals, newspapers, and other publications, several libraries are limited in such electronic retrieval. When working in smaller libraries, or seeking less mainstream publications and topics, debaters may well be required to use indexes found in

reference sections of libraries.

While it only makes sense to use the faster and more convenient services, debaters and their educators must use caution in becoming overly-reliant on database research. It is becoming more commonplace for debaters to give up searches once a database has been exhausted, or procrastinate research until access to a database is available. One debater at a 1995 CEDA summer camp told counselors that he could not research until that evening when he would be able to "Lex," a verb he used to refer to accessing LEXIS/NEXIS. This particular debater felt that a major research library was not sufficient enough for him to complete his research assignment. The point at which students use databases as their exclusive means of research is the point at which the technology has become more detrimental than beneficial in that student's debate training.

The six areas outlined herein present major concerns surrounding electronic evidence gathering. While it seems reasonable to welcome electronic gathering capabilities with open arms, the evolution of such technology in CEDA debate has provided the impetus for strong feelings on each side of the issue. The present study seeks to define present attitudes regarding the use of on-line research, and LEXIS/NEXIS in particular.

Methodology

Two surveys were conducted--a mail survey to CEDA programs and a tournament survey of CEDA debaters. The surveys set out to

answer a number of research questions:

R1 How many students and programs use LEXIS/NEXIS and other database services?

R2 What are general attitudes of programs and students regarding the use of LEXIS/NEXIS and other database services in CEDA debate?

R3 What impact does a debate program's budget have on general attitudes regarding the use of LEXIS/NEXIS and other database services in CEDA debate?

R4 What impact does the perceived quality of a college or university library have on a program's general attitudes regarding the use of LEXIS/NEXIS and other database services in CEDA debate?

R5 What impact does having access to LEXIS/NEXIS or other databases have on general attitudes regarding the use of LEXIS/NEXIS and other database services in CEDA debate?

R6 What impact does a program's national CEDA ranking have on a student's general attitudes regarding the use of LEXIS/NEXIS and other database services in CEDA debate?

Subjects -- Survey One

A survey was designed and mailed to all addresses on the most current mailing list of the Cross Examination Debate Association. The 238 potential respondents were asked to respond to several demographic items designed to determine program budgets, activities, coaching staffs, travel patterns, access to databases, and perceptions of the quality of their library, as

well as their reliance on database research. The survey also included 12 statements regarding the use of LEXIS/NEXIS and other database services in CEDA debate. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement in a Likert-type seven point scale.

Subjects -- Survey Two

Debaters were surveyed at a major Midwest tournament during the fall of 1995. Four divisions of CEDA were offered, with a total of 204 students involved. Surveys were included with a Saturday morning round's ballots. Students were asked to complete and return the surveys to the ballot return table by the end of the day. Demographic items centered around high school and college debate experience, level of CEDA involvement, the use of databases in research, and characteristics of the debaters' program. The second page of the survey was identical to the attitude items asked in survey one.

Survey Processing

Survey one was returned by fax or mail, while survey two was collected at the tournament. Results are reported in raw scores, with percentages and mean scores used to determine comparisons. (See appendix one for copies of each survey instrument.)

Results

A total of 71 programs responded to survey one, a response rate of 29.8%. A total of 73 useable responses to survey two were received, a response rate of 35.8%.' While each response rate is lower than desired they were determined acceptable for

this study. Survey one was mailed to all programs included on the current CEDA mailing list, making that survey national in scope. The tournament at which survey two was distributed featured over 200 debaters from 16 states ranging geographically from Utah to New York, providing for a variety of regional perspectives.

Numbers vary from item to item as a result of some respondents not completing all survey questions. Additionally, items that were responded to in an unclear or incomplete manner were disregarded.

Survey One

The ten separate budget categories provided for in the original survey are combined into three for final tabulation. (See table one for a breakdown of budgets of responding programs). While the largest number of respondents report an annual budget of less than $15,000.00, the range of responses show a relative balance among the three categories.

Table One--Program Budgets

Budget Category	0 - $15,000.00	$15,000 - $30,000	$30,000 - over $50,000
Number of Programs	30	19	21

Most respondents have coaching staffs that are larger for debate (a mean of 1.68) than for other activities (a mean of .92). Some programs report having the same staff for both debate and other events. Novices comprise the largest percentage of debaters

reported to participate in the responding programs. A total of 306 novices, or an average of 4.31 per program is reported. The numbers of debaters in junior varsity and varsity is 144, or an average of 2.03 and 226.5, or an average of 3.19 respectively. Lincoln-Douglas debaters are in short supply at 26, or an average of .37. Parliamentary debaters total 43.5, or an average of .61.

Most of the responding programs (61) report participation in CEDA activities. A large number (50) also participate in individual events, while another 22 participate in parliamentary debate. Seven respondents participate in National Debate Tournament (NDT) debate while another three are involved in National Educational Debate Association (NEDA) activities. Only one program reports being affiliated with both CEDA and NEDA, with two being involved in NDT and CEDA activities. More tournaments are attended in the spring than in the fall, a difference in averages of 3.89 for the fall and 5.56 for the spring.

Less than half of the respondents report having access to LEXIS/NEXIS (28), while another 30 have access to a database other than LEXIS/NEXIS. With regards to library facilities, most programs perceive their library to be below average. (See table two for a breakdown of perceived library quality.) Finally, most programs report little reliance on on-line research. (See table three for a breakdown of reported reliance on on-line research.)

Table Two--Perceived Library Quality

Perceived Library Quality	poor	fair	average	good	excellent
Responses	20	20	13	11	7

Table Three--Reliance on On-Line Research

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Heavily
	16	15	4	13	5	10	8	

Each attitude item is phrased as a statement, followed by a seven point agree/disagree scale. The majority of respondents agree that: (1) LEXIS/NEXIS has created a climate of "haves" and "have nots" in the CEDA community (43, or 61%); (2) is critical to be nationally competitive in CEDA debate (44, or 62%); (3) puts programs without access to the services at a disadvantage when debating programs with access (47, or 66%); and (4) is relied upon too heavily by programs that use it (37, or 52%). The majority of respondents also feel that forensics educators should train students in the use of on-line research (66, or 93%), and that when affordable, educators should allow virtually unlimited access to and use of on-line services in research (51, or 72%). The majority of respondents disagree that access to LEXIS/NEXIS by some CEDA programs while others are precluded is an issue of fairness to be considered in debate rounds (40, or 56%). (See table four for a breakdown of program responses to each of the 12 attitude items.)

Table Four- Program Attitude Responses

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Item 1	21	14	9	11	2	5	3
Item 2	8	7	17	18	2	4	8
Item 3	24	11	9	9	5	2	4
Item 4	8	12	12	10	3	12	7
Item 5	23	11	13	12	4	1	2
Item 6	6	5	9	21	10	7	5
Item 7	9	18	10	15	3	4	5
Item 8	6	3	4	9	4	7	29
Item 9	2	4	13	22	6	5	10
Item 10	1	3	7	33	3	5	9
Item 11	39	17	10	3	0	0	0
Item 12	34	10	7	3	4	6	5

Survey Two

A majority of respondents are first and second year college debaters (53 or 73%), open debaters (37 or 51%), and competitors in only debate (60 or 82%). A majority of respondents report having access to a database (55 or 75%), with a majority of those relying on database resources for more than half of their total debate research (36 or 65%). Additionally, most of the respondents with access to a database use LEXIS/NEXIS (38 or 69%). Of the 18 respondents who report not using a database, most (14 or 78%) list not having access as the only reason for their lack of use. In terms of program descriptors, 31 (42%) report their program having a budget of more than $30,000; 22 (30%) come from programs with a budget of less than $15,000; 21

(29%) are in programs than compete in more than CEDA; 47 (64%) are in programs that often rank in CEDA's top 50; an equal number (44, or 60%) compete in programs with national and regional circuit schedules; 41 (56%) have coaching staffs of more than one; and 25 (34%) debate for programs with team subscriptions to databases.

The majority of respondents agree that LEXIS/NEXIS has: (1) created a climate of "haves" and "have nots" in the CEDA community (38 or 52%); (2) is critical to be nationally competitive in CEDA debate (49 or 67%); and (3) puts programs at a competitive advantage when debating programs without access (45 or 62%). A large number of respondents also agree that forensics educators should train their students in the use of on-line research (62 or 85%), and that when affordable, educators should allow virtually unlimited access to on-line services in research (53 or 73%). The majority of respondents disagree that LEXIS/NEXIS has: (1) negatively impacted the overall use of evidence in CEDA (46 or 63%); (2) is more appropriate for advanced than non-advanced debaters (39 or 53%); and (3) has poor quality evidence (40 or 55%). Additionally, the majority of respondents disagree that access to LEXIS/NEXIS by some programs while others are precluded from having access is an issue of fairness to be considered in debate rounds (55 or 75%). (See table five for a breakdown of student responses to each of the 12 attitude items.)

Table Five--Student Attitude Responses

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Item 1	13	13	12	15	3	6	10
Item 2	5	0	1	18	7	13	26
Item 3	27	15	7	11	5	5	2
Item 4	5	11	5	14	6	10	23
Item 5	21	7	17	10	6	8	6
Item 6	4	7	11	21	6	11	11
Item 7	7	9	14	14	7	8	13
Item 8	2	5	1	10	2	7	46
Item 9	1	1	2	25	6	8	26
Item 10	6	6	1	32	6	5	13
Item 11	41	15	6	10	3	0	0
Item 12	37	11	6	13	3	1	3

While results of each survey are reported independent of one another, the two are combined for answers to several of the research questions in this study. What follows are the survey results that answer each of this study's six research questions.

Research Question One

A small majority of students responding in survey two (38 or 52%) use LEXIS/NEXIS, while less than half of the programs responding to survey one (28 or 39%) have access to the database. In addition to the 28 programs with access to LEXIS/NEXIS, another 30 report having access to other database services, making the total number of programs with database access 58, or 82%. In addition to the 38 students that report using LEXIS/NEXIS, another 17 use other database services, making the

total number of students who use database services 55, or 75%.

Research Question Two

The general attitudes of students and programs regarding the use of LEXIS/NEXIS and other database services in CEDA debate are reported in tables four and five. These results are further outlined in terms of how they contribute to answering other research questions. Additionally, specific attitude items are examined in the discussion section that follows.

To simplify the reporting answers to the remaining research questions, the seven item Likert-type scale used in the 12 attitude statements are simplified to agreement, or "A" (responses "1" through "3"), neutrality, or "N" (response "4"), and disagreement, or "D" (responses "5" through "7"). Additionally, percentage totals for some items are not 100%, due to some respondents not completing all questions in their surveys.

Research Question Three

Program budgets were placed in the same three categories that are reported in table one. Student responses are placed in two categories--program budgets less than $15,000 and program budgets over $30,000. (See tables six and seven for a breakdown of attitudes according to program budget.) Major differences of opinion within student surveys are expressed on items one and seven. With regards to whether or not LEXIS/NEXIS has created a climate of "haves" and "have nots" in the CEDA community, 15, or 68%

Table Six--Program Budget and Attitudes (Survey One)

		0 - $15,000 n=30	$15,000 to $30,000 n=18	$30,000 to over $50,000 n=21
Item 1	A	23 77%	11 61%	10 48%
	N	2 7%	2 11%	7 33%
	D	2 7%	5 28%	4 19%
Item 2	A	17 57%	9 50%	6 29%
	N	8 27%	6 33%	4 19%
	D	2 7%	3 17%	10 48%
Item 3	A	19 63%	13 72%	12 57%
	N	3 10%	1 6%	5 24%
	D	4 13%	4 22%	4 19%
Item 4	A	14 47%	8 44%	10 48%
	N	6 20%	3 17%	1 5%
	D	6 20%	7 39%	10 48%
Item 5	A	22 73%	14 78%	12 57%
	N	4 13%	3 17%	8 38%
	D	2 7%	1 6%	4 19%
Item 6	A	12 40%	6 33%	3 14%
	N	7 23%	5 28%	10 48%
	D	8 27%	7 39%	6 29%
Item 7	A	18 60%	11 61%	8 38%
	N	3 10%	7 39%	6 29%
	D	5 17%	0 0%	7 33%
Item 8	A	9 30%	7 39%	4 19%
	N	3 10%	5 28%	2 10%
	D	14 47%	10 56%	16 76%
Item 9	A	5 17%	10 56%	4 19%
	N	13 43%	3 17%	6 29%
	D	6 20%	5 28%	11 52%
Item 10	A	3 10%	7 39%	1 5%
	N	17 57%	8 44%	9 43%
	D	4 13%	2 11%	11 52%
Item 11	A	27 90%	17 94%	21 100%
	N	2 7%	1 0%	0 0%
	D	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Item 12	A	21 70%	15 83%	16 76%
	N	3 10%	0 0%	0 0%
	D	6 20%	3 17%	5 24%

Table Seven--Program Budget and Attitudes (Survey Two)

		Less than $15,000 n=22		Over $30,000 n=31	
Item 1	A	15	68%	11	35%
	N	5	22%	5	16%
	D	2	9%	14	45%
Item 2	A	4	18%	3	10%
	N	8	36%	5	16%
	D	10	45%	22	71%
Item 3	A	17	73%	18	58%
	N	2	9%	4	13%
	D	5	23%	8	26%
Item 4	A	3	14%	10	32%
	N	6	27%	3	10%
	D	13	59%	17	55%
Item 5	A	15	68%	18	58%
	N	5	23%	3	10%
	D	2	9%	10	32%
Item 6	A	9	41%	9	29%
	N	8	36%	10	32%
	D	5	23%	10	32%
Item 7	A	12	55%	9	29%
	N	5	23%	6	19%
	D	5	23%	15	48%
Item 8	A	5	23%	1	3%
	N	4	18%	0	0%
	D	13	59%	26	84%
Item 9	A	1	5%	2	6%
	N	11	50%	0	0%
	D	10	45%	23	74%
Item 10	A	2	9%	8	26%
	N	15	68%	8	26%
	D	5	23%	14	45%
Item 11	A	18	82%	26	84%
	N	3	14%	3	10%
	D	1	5%	1	3%
Item 12	A	16	73%	25	81%
	N	4	18%	3	10%
	D	2	9%	2	6%

of respondents from programs with budgets less than $15,000 agreed, while 14, or 45% of those from programs with budgets more than $30,000 disagree. As to whether or not programs using LEXIS/NEXIS rely too heavily on database research, 12, or 55% of respondents from smaller budget programs agree, while 15, or 48% of respondents from larger budget programs agree.

Differences of opinion from program responses are found in items two and nine. Most respondents within the two lowest budget categories (0 to $15,000 and $15,000 to $30,000) feel that LEXIS/NEXIS services have negatively impacted the overall use of evidence in CEDA debates. However, most respondents within the highest budget category ($30,000 - $50,000 and over) disagree with the second item. There was disagreement within all three categories as to whether or not the quality of evidence gathered from LEXIS/NEXIS services is poor. The lowest budget category reveals neutrality, the middle budget category reveals agreement, and the highest budget category reveals disagreement.

Research Question Four

Relative agreement exists on each attitude item as a result of perceived quality of one's campus library. (See table eight for a comparison of perceived library quality and attitude items.) The single item on which differences of opinion are expressed is item six, suggesting that programs without LEXIS/NEXIS but with access to other databases are at a competitive disadvantage when debating programs with access to LEXIS/NEXIS.

Table Eight--Perceived Library Quality and Attitudes

		Below Average n=40		Average n=13		Above Average n=18	
Item 1	A	30	75%	6	46%	8	44%
	N	3	8%	2	15%	6	33%
	D	7	18%	3	23%	1	6%
Item 2	A	21	53%	7	54%	4	22%
	N	12	30%	1	8%	5	28%
	D	5	13%	4	31%	6	33%
Item 3	A	27	68%	7	54%	10	56%
	N	7	18%	1	8%	1	6%
	D	4	10%	4	31%	4	22%
Item 4	A	19	48%	5	38%	8	44%
	N	6	15%	1	8%	3	17%
	D	13	33%	6	46%	4	22%
Item 5	A	33	83%	5	38%	10	56%
	N	4	10%	4	31%	4	22%
	D	3	8%	3	23%	1	6%
Item 6	A	18	45%	2	15%	0	0%
	N	11	28%	6	46%	5	28%
	D	10	25%	3	23%	9	50%
Item 7	A	22	55%	5	38%	10	56%
	N	8	20%	5	38%	3	17%
	D	8	20%	2	15%	2	11%
Item 8	A	9	23%	2	15%	2	11%
	N	5	13%	3	23%	2	11%
	D	21	53%	7	54%	12	67%
Item 9	A	13	33%	3	23%	3	17%
	N	11	28%	7	54%	4	22%
	D	12	30%	2	15%	8	44%
Item 10	A	7	18%	1	8%	3	17%
	N	20	50%	9	69%	5	28%
	D	9	23%	2	15%	6	33%
Item 11	A	37	93%	12	92%	17	94%
	N	2	5%	1	8%	0	0%
	D	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Item 12	A	28	70%	9	69%	15	83%
	N	2	5%	1	8%	0	0%
	D	10	25%	3	23%	2	11%

Research Question Five

Having access to LEXIS/NEXIS or other databases creates limited differences of opinion on four of the 12 attitude items. (See table nine for a breakdown of comparisons between access to LEXIS/NEXIS and other databases and responses to attitude items.) Not having access to LEXIS/NEXIS or similar databases results in stronger agreement among program respondents with item one, that LEXIS/NEXIS services have created a climate of "haves" and "have nots" within the CEDA community. Even though agreement is much stronger with programs lacking access, it is important to note that the largest percentage of responses for all programs is agreement with the statement.

Within student responses to survey two, having access to any database results in more disagreement with the second item, that LEXIS/NEXIS has negatively impacted the overall use of evidence in CEDA debates. Relative balance in responses is found among students lacking database access. Another difference among student respondents is found in item seven, where a majority of students with database access disagree that programs with database access rely too heavily on database research. A majority of students lacking similar access agree with the item.

The final item on which differences of opinion are found is the fourth, stating that use of LEXIS/NEXIS is more appropriate for advanced debaters than for inexperienced debaters. A majority of programs having LEXIS/NEXIS access disagree, while a majority of programs lacking access agree with the statement.

Table Nine--Access to LEXIS/NEXIS or Other Database and Attitudes

	Student Has Access N=54		Student Has No Access N=19		Program Has LEXIS/NEXIS N=27		No Program LEXIS/NEXIS N=36	
Item 1 A	26	48%	11	58%	11	41%	30	83%
N	12	22%	3	16%	8	30%	3	8%
D	14	26%	4	21%	8	30%	2	6%
Item 2 A	1	2%	5	26%	10	37%	19	53%
N	12	22%	6	32%	5	19%	14	39%
D	39	72%	6	32%	11	41%	3	8%
Item 3 A	34	63%	15	79%	13	48%	27	75%
N	7	13%	3	16%	4	15%	6	17%
D	12	22%	0	0%	10	37%	3	8%
Item 4 A	14	26%	6	32%	10	37%	20	56%
N	6	11%	7	37%	2	7%	8	22%
D	33	61%	6	32%	14	52%	8	22%
Item 5 A	31	57%	15	79%	16	59%	28	78%
N	7	13%	3	16%	6	22%	5	14%
D	16	30%	1	5%	4	15%	3	8%
Item 6 A	16	30%	6	32%	2	7%	17	47%
N	11	20%	10	53%	12	44%	8	22%
D	23	43%	3	16%	10	37%	11	31%
Item 7 A	20	37%	10	53%	13	48%	21	58%
N	8	15%	5	26%	9	33%	9	25%
D	25	46%	3	16%	5	19%	6	17%
Item 8 A	3	6%	5	26%	3	11%	9	25%
N	7	13%	3	16%	4	15%	9	25%
D	44	81%	10	53%	19	70%	18	50%
Item 9 A	3	6%	1	5%	10	37%	5	14%
N	16	30%	8	42%	5	19%	19	53%
D	34	63%	6	32%	11	41%	11	31%
Item 10 A	10	19%	3	16%	7	26%	4	11%
N	22	41%	9	47%	10	37%	24	67%
D	20	37%	3	16%	8	30%	8	22%
Item 11 A	47	87%	13	68%	27	100%	34	94%
N	6	11%	4	21%	0	0%	2	6%
D	1	2%	2	11%	0	0%	0	0%
Item 12 A	41	76%	12	63%	21	78%	25	69%
N	8	15%	5	26%	1	4%	1	3%
D	4	7%	2	11%	5	19%	10	28%

Research Question Six

There is little difference of opinion expressed in attitude items as a result of being a student in a program that regularly ranks among CEDA's top 50. (See table ten for a breakdown of comparisons between students' involvement with a CEDA top 50 program and responses to attitude items.) The one issue wherein the most difference of opinion is found is item six, stating that programs without access to LEXIS/NEXIS, but having access to other databases are at a competitive disadvantage when debating programs with access to LEXIS/NEXIS. A majority of students from programs not in the top 50 agree, while an almost even distribution of responses is reported from students within top 50 programs.

Discussion

While access to LEXIS/NEXIS and other databases are the subjects of disagreement and some tension within the CEDA community, perhaps the most compelling results of this study are the issues on which the community agrees.

There is agreement that LEXIS/NEXIS has created a climate of "haves" and "have nots" within the CEDA community. In retrospect, the agreement with this statement would probably be stronger if the statement made a claim of contributing and not creating such a climate. As is argued earlier in this paper, programs vary in their resources. In fairness to LEXIS/NEXIS and other on-line servers, this statement lacks uniqueness to the advent of electronic research gathering. There are a number of

Table Ten--National CEDA Ranking and Attitudes

		Program in Top 50 Student N=51		Program Not in Top 50 Student N=20	
Item 1	A	29	57%	8	40%
	N	7	14%	8	40%
	D	15	29%	4	20%
Item 2	A	5	10%	1	5%
	N	13	25%	5	25%
	D	31	61%	14	70%
Item 3	A	34	67%	13	65%
	N	6	12%	5	25%
	D	10	20%	2	10%
Item 4	A	16	31%	4	20%
	N	9	18%	3	15%
	D	25	49%	13	65%
Item 5	A	33	65%	12	60%
	N	4	8%	5	25%
	D	14	27%	3	15%
Item 6	A	16	31%	4	20%
	N	16	31%	5	25%
	D	15	29%	11	55%
Item 7	A	23	45%	5	25%
	N	7	14%	8	40%
	D	20	39%	7	35%
Item 8	A	7	14%	1	5%
	N	5	10%	5	25%
	D	39	76%	14	70%
Item 9	A	3	6%	2	10%
	N	16	31%	9	45%
	D	30	59%	9	45%
Item 10	A	12	24%	1	5%
	N	20	39%	13	65%
	D	16	31%	5	25%
Item 11	A	42	84%	16	80%
	N	7	14%	2	10%
	D	9	18%	1	5%
Item 12	A	35	69%	15	75%
	N	9	18%	4	20%
	D	6	12%	0	0%

of factors that contribute to the creation of "elite" CEDA programs. Scholarships, large travel budgets, coaching staffs, campus facilities (quality libraries, computer labs, ample office space), and even program size and tradition are all program qualities that most directors would like to have.' Although these factors, along with access to databases, do contribute to "haves" and "have nots," they probably don't create such a climate. A finding of this study that is more persuasive than agreement with item one is the majority agreement with the statement that access to LEXIS/NEXIS places programs at a competitive advantage over programs lacking access. While the cause-effect relationship regarding LEXIS/NEXIS creating "haves" and "have nots" is tenuous, the competitive advantage in debate rounds of having these services is easier to argue and clearer to see.

With regards to program resources, it is interesting that so few differences exist in attitudes as a result of program budget. While respondents in all budget categories agree that LEXIS/NEXIS has created a climate of "haves" and "have nots," the agreement is strongest (77%) in the lowest budget category and weakest (48%) in the highest. Likewise, nearly three-fourths of the respondents in the lower budget categories feel that access to LEXIS/NEXIS puts programs at a competitive advantage over programs lacking access, while a smaller majority, just over half, in the highest budget category have similar feelings. The fact that a majority agree that (1) there is a competitive

advantage associated with LEXIS/NEXIS, and (2) LEXIS/NEXIS is critical to programs wishing to be nationally competitive is testament to its potential value as a research tool. However, there are ways of compensating for the lack of database or LEXIS/NEXIS access. Through a combination of visits to major libraries, interlibrary loan, Internet surfing, and other such strategies, cases and positions can be constructed that are not well represented in databases. In fact, in many cases programs are at a competitive advantage when arguing positions, and affirmative cases in particular, that are well researched on databases. The more citations found for a descriptor, the more information there is for opponents to use for refutation. (This strategy also becomes a way of balancing the perceived classism that exists between programs with and without database access.) The slight difference in agreement may also be a sign of not being as sensitive to the competitive advantage if you are the beneficiary of it.

Another finding worth discussing is that the majority of respondents in smaller budget programs perceive that programs using LEXIS/NEXIS and other on-line services rely too heavily on database research. Student respondents lacking access also perceive an over-reliance on databases by programs with them. There are a couple of possible explanations for these results. First, it is reasonable to assume that programs with access to a tool that places debaters at a competitive advantage will use it. When programs lack access to databases they will obviously make

limited use of on-line research in debate rounds. That can create a perception of over-reliance. A second explanation is potentially more alarming. It is plausible that programs with access to database services become dependent upon the efficiency, speed, and breadth of research that are made possible through on-line services. While there is no way of proving the validity of this explanation, the claim is a reasonable one to make, particularly in light of the attitudes expressed by programs and students with access to databases that the evidence is not of poor quality and that LEXIS/NEXIS has not negatively affected the use of evidence in CEDA debate. Programs should insure that database research does not become the exclusive means by which their debaters conduct research. Using databases as an index to find items is one approach that is much more educationally and competitively prudent than using full-text database services as a sole source of team evidence and arguments.

There is also a great deal of agreement that forensics educators should train their students in the use of on-line research services. Combining the program and student responses, 128 agreed with this statement (89%) while only 16 were neutral or disagreed (11%). Interestingly, less agreement is expressed with the statement that educators should allow debaters virtually unlimited access and use of on-line research services in their evidence gathering when it is affordable. While the majority of respondents agree with having virtually unlimited access, there is more prominent disagreement and neutrality (26%) with such

unlimited use. Both of these response rates reflect a positive attitude toward on-line services. Training students to utilize databases with some restrictions allows programs to prepare students to be efficient and competent researchers who are able to use all available resources.

Students and program directors respond in a similar fashion to most of the attitude items. Differences of opinion between the two samples are in items two, four, and nine. Students disagree that LEXIS/NEXIS negatively impacts the overall use of evidence in CEDA, while program directors agree. Program respondents agree that use of LEXIS/NEXIS services is more appropriate for advanced than inexperienced debaters, while student respondents disagree. Finally, majority agreement is expressed among program directors that the quality of LEXIS/NEXIS evidence is poor, while students disagree. Interestingly, both surveys reveal strong neutrality as to whether or not LEXIS/NEXIS evidence is poor. These differences reflect the pedagogical division that sometimes exists between program's educators and students. I am not concluding that one set of opinions is more credible than the other. That being said, these differences do suggest a different perception of the impact LEXIS/NEXIS has on debate and its participants. What can be concluded from these differences is that programs should use caution when introducing students to LEXIS/NEXIS (and other databases for that matter). Debaters should know that other resources exist that some members of the CEDA community find more credible. Database services may

also be difficult for inexperienced debaters and researchers to initially understand. The perception exists among some coaches that LEXIS/NEXIS is not always a positive tool to use in debate rounds.

Also compelling are the differences that were found to not exist as a result of variables. Even though clear differences in attitudes regarding LEXIS/NEXIS and other database research are found as a result of program resources and access to database research, national CEDA rankings resulted in almost no differences in attitudes. There is a perception in the minds of some that a correlation exists between being in the top 50 of CEDA and being an "elite" program in terms of larger budgets, better libraries, etc. While this study does not provide the necessary data for such a comparison, it might be insightful to determine if greater differences exist in attitudes as a result of being among CEDA's top 10 or 20 programs. What this study seems to confirm is that the means through which CEDA rankings are determined succeed in balancing factors that can otherwise create a large community of elite programs.

Summary

The title of this paper remains a question: has this study built a case for limiting the use of LEXIS/NEXIS? My answer is a qualified yes. Neither I, nor the majority of the participants in this study, feel that LEXIS/NEXIS, or other databases for that matter, are inherently evil, noneducational, unhealthy research tools. There is consensus that LEXIS/NEXIS has created a

community of "haves" and "have nots," is critical to being nationally competitive, and creates a competitive advantage for programs that have it. However, there is a stronger consensus that programs should train students in the use of database research, and, when affordable, programs should allow debaters virtually unlimited access to on-line research services in their evidence gathering.

What this study indicates is, that while programs and students may disagree as to the value of LEXIS/NEXIS, most agree that on-line research is an important dimension in the training of debaters. Despite their benefits, use of LEXIS/NEXIS, as well as other databases, should be limited when debaters become less effective researchers. Dependency on databases will prevent debaters from developing the range of advocacy and research abilities needed to succeed in the debate arena, as well as in the world that debate prepares students to enter. Few technologies have inherent detriments until their use creates negative effects. With responsible guidance from educators, debaters, and critics, LEXIS/NEXIS can be a valuable tool for CEDA programs.

Equally, programs lacking access to LEXIS/NEXIS can find ways to compensate, whether they be research trips, alternative databases, evidence pooling, or strategic approaches to the resolution. It is unfortunate that equal access to LEXIS/NEXIS is not possible. However, the wealth of other resources and options should give programs reason for optimism.

Notes

1. The author wishes to thank Amiee Wernecke, Jarvis Parsons, and Michelle Turner for their research and editorial assistance. Additionally, the author thanks Gina Adamo-Jensen for her research assistance and helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

2. While LEXIS/NEXIS makes its services available to all potential subscribers (to the best of this author's knowledge), rate schedules and accessibility vary from program to program. In the present study, some programs reported having unlimited access to LEXIS/NEXIS with multiple passwords for as little as $320.00 per month. Other programs reported being allowed limited access, with a single password, for $1,400.00 per month. For a spirited and in-depth discussion over the role of LEXIS/NEXIS in CEDA debate, one can review the CEDA Listserve during the month of October, 1995.

3. Interestingly, costs for LEXIS/NEXIS subscriptions have actually increased. While increases may not be across the board, these rate hikes have been assigned to the higher priced and limited monthly subscriptions that were discussed earlier. One example is a program that paid $900.00 per month in the spring of 1995. That program was quoted a rate of $1,400.00 per month for the same service in the fall of 1995.

4. A total of 40 surveys were returned with no attitude items being completed. Given that the focus of this study is attitudes regarding LEXIS/NEXIS and other databases, these surveys were removed from the sample.

5. A number of studies have been done that outline trends and demographics among forensics programs. These studies document more fully what characterizes "haves" and "have nots" within the forensics community. See, for example, Rogers (1991), Burnett Pettus & Danielson (1992), Murphy (1992), and Jensen (1993).

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Appendix

Survey Instruments

Please return to:

PLEASE RETURN BY OCTOBER 26TH!

Scott Jensen
PO Box 90420
Speech and Theatre Arts
McNeese State University
Lake Charles, LA 70609
(318) 475-5922
sjensen@mcneese.edu

Surveys can also be faxed to:
Surveys can also be e-mailed to:

Program/School Information

In what staff position is the person completing this survey?

_____

1. What is your program's annual budget? (circle one)

below $5,000.00	$5,000.00 - $10,000.00
$10,000.00 - $15,000.00	$15,000.00 - $20,000.00
$20,000.00 - $25,000.00	$25,000.00 - $30,000.00
$30,000.00 - $35,000.00	$35,000.00 - $40,000.00
$40,000.00 - $50,000.00	over $50,000.00

2. How many individuals are on your coaching staff, including yourself?

_____ (debate) _____ (other activities)

3. How many debaters participate (compete at tournaments) in your program?

_____ novice _____ junior varsity

_____ varsity _____ CEDA L-D

_____ other--specify

4. In what activities does your program participate? (Please check all that apply.)

_____ CEDA debate _____ Parliamentary debate

_____ NDT debate _____ ADA debate

_____ NEDA debate _____ IEs

4a. IF your program participates in more than CEDA debate, do the same students participate in other activities?

_____ yes _____ no

4b. IF the answer to item 4a is "yes," in what events do the students participate?

5. How would you evaluate the library facilities on your campus in terms of their ability to support your forensics needs?

poor fair average good excellent

6. In how many CEDA tournaments does your program compete during the.....

fall semester _____ spring semester _____

6a. Of the total tournaments traveled to in an average year, what number would you be likely to travel your entire (or nearly entire) squad to? _____

7. How would you characterize your program's CEDA travel schedule? (Please check one.)

national circuit _____ regional circuit _____

a combination of national and regional circuit _____

a split squad--some national and others regional _____

8. How many CEDA nationals has your program attended? _____

9. Does your program plan to attend this year's CEDA National Tournament at California State - Long Beach? yes ___ no ___

10. Does your program has access to Lexis/Nexis? yes ___ no ___

10a. IF the answer to item 10 is "yes," is your access.....

_____ a private team account?

_____ a school account (library, department, etc.)

10b. IF your access is a private team account, how much do you pay for your subscription? _____

10c. IF the answer to item 10 is "no," does your program have access to any on-line services? yes ___ no ___
IF yes, please specify.....

10d. IF the answer to item 10c is "yes," is your access.....

_____ a private team account?

_____ a school account (library, department, etc.)

10e. IF your access in item 10d is a private team account, how much do you pay for your subscription? _____

11. How much does your program rely on on-line research services?

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 heavily

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Years debating: ___ High School _____ College

Division of CEDA at this tournament_____

Semesters of CEDA debate experience_____

Do you compete in events besides CEDA? ___ Yes ___ No
IF YES, in what do you compete?

Do you use a data base in your debate research? ___ Yes ___ No
IF YES, what data bases do you use?

IF YES, what percentage of your total debate research consists of data base resources?

IF NO, check all the reasons that apply:

___ no access to one
___ don't like to use data base research
___ not allowed by team
___ other (please explain)

Check all the program descriptors that fit your school and team.

___ budget over $30,000
___ budget less than $15,000
___ team competes in more than CEDA debate
___ program often ranks in CEDA's top 50
___ national circuit travel schedule
___ regional circuit travel schedule
___ coaching staff of more than one
___ team subsciption to a data base

Attitudes Regarding Lexis/Nexis and Other On-Line Research

1. Lexis/Nexis services has created a climate of "haves" and "have nots" within the CEDA community.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?

2. Lexis/Nexis services has negatively impacted the overall use of evidence in CEDA debates.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?

3. Access to Lexis/Nexis services is critical to programs that wish to be nationally competitive.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?

4. Use of Lexis/Nexis services is more appropriate for advanced debaters than for inexperienced debaters.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?

5. Programs without access to Lexis/Nexis services are at a competitive disadvantage when competing against programs with Lexis/Nexis access.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?

6. Programs without access to Lexis/Nexis services, BUT with access to other on-line data bases, are at a competitive disadvantage when competing against programs with Lexis/Nexis access.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?

7. Programs that use Lexis/Nexis and other on-line data bases rely too heavily on data base research.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?

8. Access to Lexis/Nexis by some CEDA programs, while others are precluded by Lexis/Nexis' owners from access is an issue of fairness that should be considered by judges in debate rounds.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?

9. The quality of evidence gathered from Lexis/Nexis services is poor.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?

10. The quality of evidence gathered from non Lexis/Nexis on-line data bases is better than the evidence gathered from Lexis/Nexis data bases.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?

11. Forensics educators should train their students in the use of on-line research services.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?

12. Forensics educators should allow their debaters, IF AFFORDABLE, to have virtually unlimited access and use of on-line research services in their evidence gathering.

agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 disagree
Explain?